

UPDATE

Vaccines and Preventable Diseases: HPV Vaccination

What is the HPV vaccine?

The vaccine, Gardasil, is the first vaccine developed to prevent cervical cancer, precancerous genital lesions, and genital warts due to HPV.

Who should get the HPV vaccine?

CDC recommends the HPV vaccine for all 11 and 12 year old girls. The recommendation allows for vaccination to begin at age nine. Vaccination also is recommended for females aged 13 through 26 years who have not been previously vaccinated or who have not completed the full series of shots.

How and when is the vaccine delivered?

The vaccine is given in a series of three injections over a six-month period. The second and third doses should be given at two and six months (respectively) after the first dose. HPV vaccine may be given at the same time as other vaccines.

Is the HPV vaccine effective?

The FDA has licensed the vaccine as safe and effective. This vaccine is highly effective in preventing four types of HPV in young women who have not been previously exposed to HPV. This vaccine targets HPV types that cause up to 70% of all cervical cancers and about 90% of genital warts. The vaccine will not treat existing HPV infections or their complications.

Does the vaccine contain thimerosal or mercury?

No, there is no thimerosal or mercury in the vaccine.

How long does vaccine protection last? Will a booster shot be needed?

The length of vaccine protection (immunity) is usually not known when a vaccine is first introduced. So far, studies have found that vaccinated persons are protected for five years. More research is being done to find out how long protection will last, and if a booster dose of vaccine will be needed .

Does the vaccine protect against cervical cancer?

Yes, HPV vaccine is the first vaccine developed to prevent cervical cancer. The vaccine protects against four types of HPV, including two that cause about 70% of cervical cancer.

Will the girls/women who have been vaccinated still need cervical cancer screening?

Yes, they will still need to see their healthcare provider for cervical cancer screening.

